

# Passing The Love Of Women

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Summary: From the Phantom Zone Mon-El reaches out to his friend Superboy

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The beauty of Israel is slain in her high places. How art the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places. I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women. How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!

Second Samuel 1:25-27

I watched Tasmia and Querl make love today.

Oh Gods, oh Gods ...

Querl lay her gently down on his bed, touched his lips to that tiny, sensitive spot on her breasts that she loves so much and she gasped, clinging to him, and gave herself to my friend. She couldn't seem to stop crying.

With a roar, I sprang at them, fists knotted in fury. I let the rage take me. This time I didn't try and fight it at all. It sang in my blood as I pounded at them, screaming. Again and again and again my immaterial hands passed through them, grabbing for purchase, trying to pull them apart as they moved together in that ancient rhythm. But I was helpless. There was nothing I could do except expend myself in fruitless wrath crying and striking at nothing until my body was exhausted and I fell to my knees. With my hands I covered my ears to try and shut out the sound of Tasmia's small, soft cries of pleasure as her joy spiraled to it's completion.

I really don't know which was worse; the fact that I \*wanted\* her to

cry out my name at that moment ... or the fact that she didn't.

That's the very worst thing about this hellish place. Not the Kryptonian criminals who taunt me, whose laughter rings constantly in my ears; no. I can still see into the material world. I watch life go on without me, leaving me further and further behind day by day. There's nothing I can do. God's help me I can still \*see\*. I can still \*feel\* ... But I can't touch anyone and no one can touch me. No one.

The first time I was exiled here, I fought very hard not to lose myself. Not to slip into madness. Now, sometimes I wish I \*could\* go mad. I'd give almost anything not to be able to think ... not to see ... not to hurt. There are times when I make myself remember the good things; when I tell myself how lucky I am to have so many people who love me. Lar Gand, Mon-El, of the Legion Of Superheroes is loved. So many sentients struggle to find even one other to share themselves with ... How did I find myself blessed with so many? Shady, Kal, Jo and Tinya, Querl ... my Mom, my little brother Del ...

Time has no meaning in this place so I have no idea how long I sat there, trembling and shaking with grief and pain. A long time, I think. When I looked up, Tasmia was asleep in Querl's arms. Querl was awake, though, his eyes wide with wonder, watching her as she slumbered. Now that he thought there was no one to see it and, perhaps, taunt him, his bright green eyes were alive with passion, shining with his love for Tasmia Mallor, Shadow Lass. I watched him slowly trace the line of her cheek with one hesitant finger, careful not to wake her and bit my lip. In her sleep, Tasmia smiled at his touch.

"Tasmia et mira," murmured Querl.

Coluan is not a beautiful language. It's more suited to mathematical formulae than whispered words of poetry. But, it is a simple and direct language without ambiguity or misinterpretation.

"Tasmia et mira." Querl had said

"Tasmia equals love."

I closed my eyes. Tasmia was safe, healing from what my madness had done to her, protected in the arms of someone who loved her. Querl loved her deeply. He would see to her, cherish her as I would have ... as I couldn't any longer. It was enough.

It would have to be.

After a time, I rose and walked to their bedside. Tasmia couldn't feel the kiss I tried to touch softly to her forehead, of course. Neither could I. But I did my best to let her know, across the the gulf now separating us, how much I loved her. I think that I may have partially succeeded. She smiled.

"Be happy," I whispered in her ear, "please be happy."

I watched Querl slowly fall into the abyss of sleep, nestled like spoons with Tasmia and found that I could smile. I let myself remember many quiet times in his lab in the company of Querl Dox,

Braniac 5. The easy camaraderie, the lengthy discussions of spaceship design, the physics of matter/antimatter fusion ... And one long and glorious, lazy afternoon that's really nobody's business but mine and Querl and Tasmia's.

"Watch after her, my friend," I told Querl.

Tasmia is a strong woman; strong in body and spirit. Somehow I know she's going to be all right. She and Querl both. Even before she was a Legionaire, Tasmia Mallor was a hero. The Shadow Champion of her world. For over a thousand years her family served Talok Vlll as protector's and leaders. And she has our Legion family to help her. I could leave her in Querl's loving hands.

Anger is nothing new for me. It goes back further than my exile to the Zone. Much further. I've always had a violent temper. I don't think I ever realized how violent until ... until ...

See, the thing I remember the best about my father is Paragon. He loved to play Paragon. It's a board game, a sort of Daxamite version of chess combined with poker. Bluffing is everything in Paragon. Bluffing and deception. If you don't hide your feeling from your opponent, then you lose. My father was a Master Player. Almost before I could see over the top of the table to move the pieces, I was learning how to play Paragon from my father. And losing. My father was one of Daxam's first space explorers. He was almost never home. I guess I thought that if I could just learn to play Paragon well enough to kick his butt, well, then maybe he'd ...he'd ...

But no matter how long I practiced, no matter how good I got at that sproking game, he always left anyway, off to see what was just beyond the next star system. And then one day he didn't come back. The last thing I ever did with my father was play a game of Paragon.

And I was winning.

I had the man trapped, backed into a corner. His next move was going to be his last. I don't think I've ever been happier in my life. It was going to happen. I could almost hear my father's proud voice. "Well done, son!" he'd say. "It looks like I'm going to have to stick around here for a while and practice some more!" He didn't, of course.

Instead, he called the game off before I could win.

"I have to go," he said, rising and scowling darkly down at the board. "Time and stars wait for no man! But I'll be back. We'll play again." I didn't say anything, only nodded, feeling hollow as if I were somehow not all there. I never thought he might feel threatened. From the window I watched his speeding hovercraft depart for the Spaceport.

"When he gets back," I thought, "I'll let him win. Then everything'll be all right again."

I left that board set up waiting for his return for almost six months. And then I found out that he wasn't coming home, that he had sacrificed his life to signal for help during the invasion of Earth. He was only supposed to be a neutral observer. But, I guess he must have seen something he loved there on Earth ... something he loved

more than me. When I saw that waiting Paragon board something exploded inside me. With one furious hand I swept the Board from the table where it rested, waiting futilely now for someone who was never going to come back. I've always been strong even before I left Daxam. With my hands, I broke the wooden table into myriad small pieces. I could hear the bones in my hands break but I couldn't feel anything. Nothing. The Paragon pieces flew, scattering in all directions as if they were trying to escape me. I chased them down and ground the delicate carved glass to dust beneath my boots.

"Damn you!" I shouted through my tears and brought my foot down on the Kingpiece with a vengeance, "Damn you! Damn you to Sheol!"

To this day I couldn't tell you \*who\* I was shouting at. My father ...

Or me.

I sat there for what seemed like forever relishing the stabbing pain in my broken hands through gritted teeth, breathing hard. My chest heaved, gasping for air. I couldn't catch my breath.

"L - Lar?"

My head snapped up at the sound of that familiar voice to peer into my younger brother Del's wide, frightened eyes. Del was staring at me as if he didn't recognize me. As if I were suddenly someone he didn't know at all. Someone dangerous. It sure wasn't the last time I ever saw that look on someone's face when I was angry ... But it was the \*first\*. I never wanted to see that look of horrified fear on anyone's face ever again. I didn't quite make it to the bathroom before my stomach surrendered the great eiffelberry muffins Mom made for breakfast. Del wiped my face with a soft, cool cloth and held me close as I heaved and wretched.

"It's all right, Lar," he kept saying, "everything's gonna be all right. Please Gods, don't be angry. Just don't be so angry."

I swore that I'd never be that angry again.

I guess I lied, didn't I?

So far, I haven't let myself think about what might have happened when ... when .. when I hurt Tasmia. If Kal hadn't been there I think I might have killed somebody. Sweet, sweet Kal ... my beautiful Star Child ... You have the purest soul I've ever known. You'd have fought them wouldn't you? You'd have died before you let them send me back to this place. You were ready to do that. I could see it in the set of your shoulders, read it in your eyes.

And I'd have died before I let you do that.

If you hadn't been there I would have fought them. Yes, as much as I love my Legion family, I'd have fought them before I came back to this hideousness ... this ... this ... emptiness. I'd have fought them and \*someone\* would have died. The problem is it might \*not\* have been me. I'd have welcomed that just then.

But I couldn't bare the thought of laying naked all that anger, all that ugliness for you to see. \*That\* would have killed me more surely

than the lead or anything any of my fellow Legionnaires could do to me. The thought of failing you ... It would have killed something much more precious to me than just my body. As it is there's still some small part of \*me\* left. The best part; the part that loves you.

You lied to me Kal. You promised me that you'd be all right. And you're not. I've been watching you and it's breaking my heart. I mean, there's not much of that left now, but what there is aches when I see you. It's not working, is it? The crystal, I mean. It's just not enough. Everyone has noticed. Your friends are reaching out to you but you can't hear them, can you? Oh Gods, I've taken away all your joy and I can't stand that.

"C'mon Clark," says your buddy Pete Ross. "A bunch of us are going down to Kansas City this weekend for the Def Leppard concert. You wanna come along? Plenty of room in the old Rossmobile!" You try to smile but it never reaches or warms your sad blue eyes. Nothing does, anymore.

"No thanks, Pete, my Dad needs me in the store this weekend. Maybe some other time, okay?"

"The boy's grieving, Jonathan," says your mother Martha Kent, a very wise woman. "Something has hurt his heart awfully bad. What could it be?"

"Don't rightly know, Martha," her husband of many years replies, polishing his round glasses, frowning in concern.

"Do you think we should talk to him about it?" asks Martha. Jonathan Kent, a farmer who tills the earth and knows how to be patient and wait for things in their proper season, shakes his head and pats his wife's hand gently.

"I reckon the boy will tell us about it when the time's right, Martha. When he's ready."

<"When he's ready," says Jan Arrah, Element Lad. "He'll come back when he's ready.">

Oh Gods, Kal! What am I going to do with you? I can't let you go on like this. I can't. But what can I do? I can't ... I can't touch you .. . I can't be with you. If I were dead you could grieve ... Grieve and move on. But I'm not dead. I'm not. If you only had someone to talk to . . . Look, I know you think you can't talk to your Pa about this thing. Or your Ma. But you've got to talk to somebody. You've got to. Jonathan Kent loves you. You're his son. He'll understand. I know you're afraid, and ... I guess ... I guess you're ashamed, too. Gods, I should never have ... I didn't mean for this to happen. On Daxam love is love ... gender isn't an issue. Not between lovers. Gods, look at this mess I made. And I don't know how to fix it, either.

I watch you do your homework and put your schoolbooks carefully away. During dinner with your parents you pick at Martha's Kent's delicious food and say nothing, holding your silence protectively close to your heart. Dutifully, you smile, clear the table and dry the dishes for your Ma.

"I'll go and check to see that everything is closed up in the store for the night," you say.

It's just an excuse to go down into the special room you've constructed beneath the root cellar of Kent's General Store. The room that's just for Superboy. The one where you keep all your trophies and mementoes. Like the small statues of your fellow Legionnaires that glow when you're being summoned to the 30th century and Legion duty. There's the air tank the crooks used to try and escape through Smallville Lake from your very first public case.

And there's the Transpathic Matrix Crystal from the Legion Vaults. Sitting right there by the statue of Lightning Lad. Gods, I look like such a fool, smiling like an idiot. "Think of something that made you very happy," commanded Saturn Girl when she imprinted the crystal. When I did Imra turned bright scarlet. I guess she'd never seen either of us naked before.

"Try again, Lar," she suggested, ever tactful.

Then it was my turn to blush. So it was either my first sight of the Fire Rings of Beta Carinae or my first sight of \*you\* ... I decided that the Fire Rings might be less embarrassing.

You need to talk to somebody who understand. Someone who knows about being alone and unique. About being the last ...

"My people have gone. All things change as they must. It's the only Universal constant," whispers Jan Arrah, Element Lad from deep with in the recesses of my memory.

I smile.

But how to bring them together? My mind brings me a vision of long platinum blond hair and deep blue eyes that see more than they know and know more than they see.

Yes!

Nura Nal! Dream Girl? Are you listening? Can you hear me?? Is anyone listening?

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"All I know, E-Lad," says Dream Girl impatiently as I observe them, "is that you're supposed to go to the 20th century and bring Superboy back here to Legion HQ."

"But \*why\*?" inquires a puzzled Jan Arrah. "Did your dream tell you why I'm supposed to do that?" Dream Girl tapped her foot in annoyance.

"No, it didn't say," she admits, a slight frown briefly marring her perfect features. "But, \*somebody\* wants Clark here really bad. I've had the same dream for a week, now. It's driving me crazy! Will you just \*go\* already?"

Still puzzled, Jan sped away for the 20th century and Kal. Superboy

met him in the woods just outside Smallville. I watched Kal shake his head. Now, \*he\* was confused.

"Jan! I got your message. But I don't understand. If there's an emergency why couldn't I just fly to Legion HQ? Why did you have to come and get me?" Jan hesitated.

"I don't know. I think ... I think someone wanted us to talk ... " After a moment he took Kal's hand, shyly. "How \*are\* you? We haven't seen you in a long time. I miss talking to you." Kal stiffened slightly and looked away.

"I'm fine," he said. "Just fine." Jan sighed and regarded him carefully, studying with disbelief the tilt of his chin, the tenseness shouting from the corded muscles of his neck. I saw Jan squeeze Kal's hand gently.

"It's all right to be sad, you know," he murmured. Tears gathered at the corners of Kal's bright blue eyes and he fought them. Jan reached up and let one nascent tear flow onto the tip of his finger.

"It's okay to cry, too," he assured Superboy.

"No! I won't cry! I won't!" choked Kal. "If ... if .. if I cry ... then that means I think he's dead ... And he's not! He's NOT!" Jan's face lit with understanding.

"No," he said in a quiet, strong voice. "But Lar is lost to you, still. You can't see his smile, hear his voice ... feel his touch when you're lonely." Weeping silently, Kal slipped to the damp earth and sat down hard. Kneeling beside him, Jan gathered him close and stroked his hair.

"Let it go," he urged, "let the pain go ... " His hands still wet with Kal's tears, Element Lad spread his hand over Kal's chest feeling the beat of his racing Kryptonian heart. "He'll always live in here." Jan told him.

Later, I watched an exhausted Kal pulled himself from Jan's chaste embrace, looking very tired but much more peaceful. "I guess we'd better get going," he offered, "if we're going to make Legion HQ in time to save the Universe." It was a feeble joke, but the first one he'd made since my exile. Jan chuckled.

"There's no hurry," he pointed out, "it's time travel, after all." Together, they rose, regarding one another just a bit awkwardly. Jan smiled and the tension seemed to flow from Kal's body.

"I didn't know Mon-El as well as I'd have liked," he confessed. "We have plenty of time. Would you mind telling me about him?" This time it was Kal who took Jan's hand.

"I think I'd like that very much," he said. This time his smile was dazzling and reached and warmed his eyes like the sun. "But you have to promise to tell me about Trom. If everyone there could do the things you can do, it must have been a magical place."

"It was Home," said Jan.

Trapped within the confines of my immaterial prison, I smiled,

something I don't do often, knowing that all my lovers were happy and loved. The thought of another thousand years in this place is still pretty awful. But the best parts of me, Tasmia, Kal, Jo and Tinya, Querl ... are still out there. They'll never stop loving me and I'll never stop loving them. And if I have to hang on to that for another thousand years or so ... I can do that, now.

A thousand years isn't that long.

The End

End  
file.